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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to apply some research findings on social participation and attitude change to an analysis of attitudes toward educational change in a suburban community (Eastport School District). The analysis focused on identifying some of the social processes that operate to produce resistance to educational innovations reflecting social change. The paper focuses on those changes reflecting the transformation of the learning process. Innovations implemented in the Eastport schools reflect the local school's vulnerability to extra-local influences. Parent resistance to these changes were found to be a reflection of the tendency to adhere to expectations formed through previous group identification and socialization. The author suggests that maintenance of the traditional school-parent role relationship at the local level, with professional domination of authority, is inconsistent with the changes that have occurred in the district and with the expectation of active parent participation required in the modern learning process. (Author)

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PARENT RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

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Much of the research on community-school conflicts, like the research on fluoridation controversies, reveals an association between political behavior and participation in voluntary organizations. Because opposition to a professional or elite decision is typically associated with a low level of participation in civic affairs, citizens who oppose school budgets and educational change are often described as the "apathetic, alienated masses." (Crain, et al, 1969, Kornhauser, 1959).

It is suggested here that these pejorative descriptions reflect a research bias. Participation is defined in elitist terms negating informal social participation and the requirements for participation in elite activities (education, organizational skills, leisure, etc.). The fact that many communities in recent years have defeated professional decisions attests to the fallacy of this approach. (Assuming one accepts voting behavior as an indicator of action.)

A few researchers have attempted to locate the source of opposition in terms of community structure and the degree of integration between school and other community elites and informal social groups (Foskett, 1959). The need to study the impact of social change on community power structures has been pointed out recently (McCarty and Ramsey, 1971).

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A wide range of research on small groups and political behavior has documented the effect of social participation and group affiliation on attitudes toward political issues and political participation (Berelson et al, 1954, Verba, 1961). The findings suggest that attitudes on specific issues are shaped by individual predispositions, events and group identification (Campbell et al,1964). Attitude change tends to be associated with changes in group membership and awareness of the prevailing norms of new membership groups (Newcomb, 1958).

This paper will attempt to apply some of these findings on social participation and attitude change to an analysis of attitudes toward educational change in a suburban community in order to identify some of the social processes which operate to produce resistance to educational innovations that reflect social change.

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This discussion relies on the conception of the local public school as an open social institution periodically subjected to pressures for change from influences beyond the local community as well as changes within the local community. Currently these extra-local pressures reflect technological change (changes in occupational role requirements), political issues (the demand for social equality), and changes in educational philosophy based on new insights into the social and psychological factors in learning or a transformation of the learning process. At the community level changes in the school reflect population turnover, increasing pluralism and spiraling educational costs.

Since this paper will focus on the changes reflecting the transformation of the learning process, we will refer briefly to the factors underlying the first two issues.

Occupational change. The narrow range of occupational roles characteristic of the traditional society, with a limited number of elite positions, tended toward the development of a narrow range of occupational role behaviors for many members of the society (this is the case where roles are ascribed in a caste system and access to elite occupational roles limited in a class system). This restriction of occupational role behavior is assumed to be dysfunctional in a rapidly changing society. The characteristic required for adapting to changing occupational roles can be referred to as "role flexibility" or the elaboration of occupational role requirements. The number of occupations and professions which permit a narrow range of role behavior in modern society is limited. Thus the schools can no longer "train" a child for a specific occupational role.

The growth of egalitarianism. The inability of the public schools and formal socializing agents to prepare large numbers of minority youth for participation in the "mainstream" of American society has challenged the authority of the traditional public school.

The Transformation of the Learning Process

The transformation of the learning process that we are concerned with here is related to the notion that learning requires the active participation or involvement of the student. Changes in teaching styles and methods developed in extra-local agencies have been diffused at the local school level through teachers and administrators. These changes suggest a typology of schools in terms of "traditional" and "modern" authority. Since American public schools are in an almost constant state of transition because of their vulnerability to local and extra-local influences, and there is

typically resistance at the local level, no school will be expected to exhibit all of the characteristics in either category.

The Traditional School

The basis of student and parent compliance in the traditional school relied on acceptance of the authority of the school as the agency for the socialization of the young. Power was concentrated in the teacher's role and this is felt by educational modernists to have induced "passivity" in the learner. Consensus on the goals of the school in the three roles to be discussed here: the teacher (or other school representative), the parent and the child -- insured consensus on role expectations. That is, the behavior of the three role incumbents. The primary function of the school was the socialization of the child (training in academic or vocational skills, citizenship and "conduct") for participation in society. In the United States the public school is the only training agency for a majority of American youth and attendance mandated by the state. Assumption of professional, managerial and vocational roles is dependent on successful achievement of behaviors required by the school.

Pre-school socialization of the American born child provided appropriate "anticipatory socialization" (Merton, 1957) for the student role. The similarity of the parents' educational experience enabled them to equip the child with behavioral training appropriate to public school requirements.

Assimilation of the appropriate behaviors for the alien parent and student was provided by a variety of informal and formal socialization agents (neighbors, teachers, social workers, psychologists, etc.).

Academic achievement tends to be associated with school-home consensus on student role expectations (Presthus, 1965). Where there is a conflict between these two socializing agencies, professional socializing agents provide information on appropriate

student role behavior. This is based on the school's definition of the student role which emphasizes compliance to the authority of the teacher. Non-compliance is defined as deviance.

The Modern School

This "restricted" behavior (a narrow range of permissible action controlled by the home and the school) is characteristic and appropriate to a traditional society with a restricted number of elaborated roles available to its members. It is less appropriate to a modern egalitarian society which offers a wide variety of occupational role choices to <u>all</u> members of the society. The ability to succeed in any given occupational role becomes dependent on the accessibility of opportunities to learn the behaviors (vocational and/or intellectual skills) required for various occupational roles. As a society becomes more modern there is an increase in available roles, opportunities to achieve roles, development of new roles and elimination of dysfunctional roles.

Effective socialization in the home and school requires the development of cognitive and social skills to enable the student to select from this wide variety of occupational roles and the ability to adjust to changing role requirements or to adapt to the requirements of new roles (elaboration of role behavior). Since neither of these socializing agencies can predict the role behaviors that will be required in the future, they cannot adhere to the authority relationships of the traditional society.

Relationships in the modern school are interactions between equals. The authority of the parent or teacher lies in his ability to enage the respect and cooperation of the child. Student compliance in the modern school is induced through persuasion or influence in order to permit the child to play an active role in the learning process. The coercive (punishment) and utilitarian (external rewards)

power characteristic of the traditional school has been replaced by identitive power (Etzioni, 1965). Teacher behavior and classroom activities are designed to help the child "like" school. The teacher's role requires instrumental (task demanding) as well as affective behavior. Where parent and school role expectations diverge (usually an indicator that the parent has been socialized to expectations required of the traditional school) the task of the school representative is to induce, through the use of identitive power, a change in parent role expectations.

Role Conflict

This section will define the concepts of role conflict and group identification to be used to interpret parent resistance to educational innovation reflecting the transformation of the learning process.

The term role to be used here refers to the set of expectations and behaviors associated with a position in a system of social relationships. For each position there is an array of counter-positions or "role-partners." Expectations are norms or "evaluative standards" applied to an incumbent of a position (Gross, 1964, Merton, 1957). Because of differing locations in the social structure, the expectations of a role incumbent may differ from the expectations of his role partners. When role behavior is restricted, as in the case of the traditional society, there is a higher probability for consensus in the role expectations associated with most positions in the society. As societies become more differentiated, due to the proliferation of occupational roles, multiple group membership, immigration and assimilation, this probability lessens. Because of this differentiation, role relationships in modern societies are prone to role-conflict created by divergent role expectations. Where interaction is restricted in a modern society there is a tendency for the misinterpretation of behavior.

The focal position we are concerned with here is that of the mother in relation to the school system. The counter-positions included in the social relationships related to this position are: the child, the father, teacher(s) and other school representatives, and other school parents.

Expectations for the mother's role behavior in the traditional school-parent relationship are defined by the school and the mother's previous socialization: she has been trained to conform to school authority. The school represents a positive reference point. Because of the consensus in the expectations maintained by the mother and school representatives, interaction between the home and school in the traditional school system is minimal and typically based on student deviance. Differences in role expectations may occur, but there is less chance for these divergent expectations to become visible to the mother.

Should this divergence become visible to the mother, she will conform to the expectations of the school representative because of his/her greater authority and the mother's commitment to the norms of the school.

The differentiation characteristic of modern societies and the active participation in the child's learning process required in the modern school-parent relationship, create conditions for an increase in the mother's visibility of divergent role expectations. This results from the probability that the mother will interact with role partners who maintain differing expectations for her behavior as well as the child's.

The authority of the modern school does not require the mother to conform to the expectations of the school representative. Differences in role behavior are anticipated because of the recognized differences in pluralistic communities and the school itself. Where

the norms of the two role partners diverge, the mother will probably adapt to the expectations of the school representative through an increase in interaction and modification of expectations. The difference between these interactions in the traditional and modern school is that in the latter, conflict is resolved through mutual influence: mediation, compromise and adaptation. This results from the fact that authority is shared in modern school-parent relationships which are interactions between equals.

The mother's conformity in traditional school relationships and adaptation in modern school relationships is a function of the dominant community norms, the mother's awareness of these norms and her previous socialization. The availability of opportunities to perceive the dominant norms if she is not aware depends on her ability to interact with others who perceive and share these norms.

The representatives of the school system and other mothers comprise the mother's frame of reference. Where the mother's expectations, established through previous socialization, differ from the dominant school norms and the mother adheres to the norm of a prior reference group, the school may be perceived as a negative reference point. If the mother's norms conflict with another mother's norms the other mother will also be perceived as a negative reference point.

A STUDY OF PARENT RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Data for this analysis were obtained from a four-year field study of parent behavior in formal and informal meetings on school affairs, content analysis of school communications, letters to daily newspaper and conversations with elite and non-elite participants.

The school district, Eastport, includes one pluralistic and two factional suburbs. Because of their similarities, the factional

suburbs will be discussed as one community: Old Haven. Both are Republican dominated, have restricted country clubs and friendship cliques are frequently formed on a religious basis. Since the mid-'50's these two communities have experienced a decline in Protestant residents and a rise in Jewish residents. Student enrollments in Old Haven elementary schools during this period reflect the increase in the Jewish population and an increase in Catholic students transferred from local parochial schools.

During the past 10 years, the Eastport schools (4 elementary, one middle and one high school) have implemented innovations which reflect the schools' transition from a traditional to a modern institution. Most active Eastport parents appear to be educational traditionalists in that they expect the school to prepare their children for college or a vocational career. They differ on the institutional means for achieving these goals.

The transition from traditional to modern educational practices has been unplanned and fragmentary. The system still adheres to the traditional definition of the parent role. Thus parents who adhere to the traditional educational philosophy but challenge the school's authority will be referred to as traditional non-conformists. Non-conformity is interpreted here as based on positive identification with an earlier reference group. The parent who adheres to the modern educational philosophy and challenges school authority will be referred to as a modern non-conformist. This type of non-conformity is based on positive identification with an emerging or future reference group (Merton, 1957).

The Exclusion of Non-Conformists

The Old Haven school newcomer is socialized to the dominant norms related to school interactions through school representatives

and other mothers. Due to the low interaction between school administrators and inactive mothers, the newcomer's ability to perceive the norms relating to the parent-school relationship is lessened. This is compounded in Old Haven where the mother's interaction with other mothers within the school system is restricted by the school elite and within the community by political, religious and social cleavage.

The formal channels for parent participation in Eastport school affairs have been dominated since 1961 by traditional conformists who block the newcomer's visibility of the prevailing norms as well as the non-conformist's efforts to influence other parents.

Most mothers who attend school meetings exhibit the restricted role behavior characteristic of a traditional society. This is revealed in their isolated sub-group affiliations and emphasis on "protecting" their children from the influence of children from other classes and sub-groups. The intense interest in their own children and the nuclear family relationship is a reflection of the traditional socialization of the middle class American mother and restriction of opportunity to assume non-familial roles. This restriction inhibits the diffusion of new educational ideas since it is the Old Haven mothers who dominate school affairs.

The exclusion of non-conformists from active participation in school affairs began in 1961 with the appointment of the district's first "outside" superintendent, Dr. A. With the support of a coalition of politically "liberal" parents from Eastport and Old Haven, Dr. A instituted several strategies to inhibit parent participation in decision-making related to plant expansion and innovations (Steinberg, 1971). High administrative-parent interaction was confined to a small group of supportive mothers who dominated formal participatory roles (in the PTA and school board appointed

citizens committees). These practices which isolated most parents from decision-making were justified by Dr. A's belief that controversy would activate the "conservative" members of the community and impede educational reforms.

This isolation ended in 1969 following superintendency-school board turnover and the district's first budget defeat. The conflict was mediated through mechanisms which integrated the school board with various community factions. Through an increase in direct interaction between the board and community groups, the board generated support for subsequent school budgets. But the changes in the school board-parent relationship were not accompanied by parallel changes in the administration-parent relationship nor have mechanisms been introduced to promote interaction between conflicting parent sub-groups.

School board response to requests for a return to traditional or an increase in modern educational practices, reveal the board's adherence to the traditional definition of the parental role, despite the legitimation of parent involvement at the decision-making level. Program changes instituted since 1970 reflect board and administrative responsiveness to parent concerns, but in direct interactions, parents are frequently told that they must comply with professional decisions.

PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPANTS

The pattern of parent participation since 1969, compared to the 1961-1968 period, reveals relatively high turn-out for meetings sponsored by the school board and relatively low turn-out for meetings sponsored by local school administrations or PTA's.

The highest level of participation and greatest resistance to educational change in Eastport schools appears to be concentrated

in Old Haven. Participants in school activities (exclusive of interactions related to individual children) fall into three categories:

The School Elite. Mothers in Eastport who occupy parent-elected formal positions related to the school system (PTA offices, and other school committees) are the most active and dominate school affairs. They are all middle class, college educated and many of their extra-school group affiliations are related to local civic affairs. Although these affiliations sometimes require interaction with non-elite members of the community, this interaction is maintained on a formal level (task-oriented activities). These mothers possess organizational skills and utilize mass media techniques to communicate with other school parents: lectures or classroom style programs or flyers which do not foster interaction between other parents and have a tendency to induce passivity. The elite are educational traditionalists.

Administrative or teacher innovations which reflect modernism are usually supported by the elite but because of their acceptance of the professional definition of the parent role elitists will be referred to as conformists. Elitists discuss and criticize the changes in Eastport schools but these discussions are usually confined to closed sessions with administrators or private meetings.

The elitists are in part responsible for the school administrations' perception of the community as predominantly "conservative." The elitists provide the administration with information on non-elite families and are influential in blocking further innovation through their interpretation of parent resistance. To the elite non-conforming traditionalists are "conservative troublemakers" and non-conforming modernists are "educational nuts."

Administrators are apparently unaware of the elitists isolation from other parents, but since the PTA is the only organized parent group it is their primary source of information on the community. Administrators frequently ask the elite to predict parent reaction to proposed educational changes. Typically the elite will advise against major changes or inclusion of other parents in discussion of these proposals. They tend to withhold information on school affairs from non-elite parents to avoid controversy and attribute non-participation in PTA and other school affairs to a lack of "interest" in education.

Involved-Active Participants. Mostly college educated middle class mothers who do not occupy formal positions related to the school system but attend meetings and are vocal. Extra-school affiliations are primarily social if they are educational traditionalists and extra-local if they are modernists. This category includes the two types of non-conformists mentioned above. The traditional non-conformist is typically a parochial school educated mother and the modern non-conformist is typically a Jewish mother with cosmopolitan interests. The most vocal members of these factions are usually newcomers to Eastport or mothers who have recently transferred children from parochial to public school. (The emergence of the vocal Catholic mother is probably related to changes in the Catholic church. The emergence of the vocal Jewish mother may be related to changes in child rearing and educational theory.) These mothers believe in the concept of "local control" which leads them to think parents have a "say" in educational matters. They are more apt to attend school board sponsored meetings than PTA sponsored meetings since they regard the PTA as ineffective because of the domination of elite conformists.

Involved-Inactive Participants. This category includes conforming traditionalists and compliant modernists who accept the professional definition of the parent-school relationship. The inactivity of the compliant modernist is explained by her awareness of her non-conformity and consequent rejection by the school elite. They claim that they don't attend meetings run by or dominated by the elite because they will be "ridiculed" or "labelled" (conflict avoidance). Working class mothers in Eastport and Old Haven feel that elite mothers and administrators talk "at" them. They resent their use of educational jargon which they don't understand.

Innovations In Eastport Schools

At this time, probably none of the six Eastport schools conforms to either the traditional or modern school but each exhibits some indication of a transition process. The onset of modernism is related to the diffusion of innovation by administrators and teacher turnover. The process became visible at the elementary level with the elimination of report cards and institution of parent-teacher conferences to provide parents with information on achievement and classroom behavior. Underlying this change was recognition of the eed to involve parents in the learning process so they could nderstand teacher expectations for student role behavior.

In the past 10 years there has been a steady increase in the mber of Eastport teachers whose teaching style places them in the dern category. (The "open classroom" is just one indicator of anges reflecting the modern philosophy.)

Parent-teacher conferences were implemented on a system-wide sis, but teaching style is a factor dependent on the teacher's raining and norms governing professional relationships. As an

autonomous professional, the teacher has the choice of adhering to a traditional or modern style. Thus students in Eastport schools are required to adapt to a range of teaching styles.

Changing Teaching Styles and Parental Conflict

The introduction of parent- teacher conferences has had the unanticipated consequence of creating conflict in the parent-school relationship. It has increased parent visibility of the teacher as well as changes in teaching styles.

Until 1971 the manifestation of this parent role conflict -- resistance to changes in the Eastport schools -- was most often expressed in private discussions between mothers. The resistance is associated with a low level of participation in formal school affairs and an adherence to role expectations developed through the mother's previous group affiliations. The development of parental norms appropriate for acceptance of the requirements of the modern school is inhibited by these role expectations, the fragmentation of the community and exclusion of non-conforming traditionslists from active participation in school related positions. These factors decrease opportunities for the interaction required to modify existing attitudes. The modification of attitudes is further inhibited by the confusion resulting from the transitional character of the school system itself. The school has become an ambiguous reference point for the involved non-elite mother.

A conflict based on changes in teaching styles appears to be associated with teachers who exhibit behavior placing them in the extremes of either the traditional or modern teaching category. This conflict is indicated in complaints from traditional nonconformists that the teacher is too "rigid." Teacher conflict is reduced by professional control of the parent-school relationship. Nevertheless, there is one school in Old Haven which has a history

of bitter parent teacher controversies related to these conflicting role expectations.

History of Parent Conflict Related to Teaching Styles

Tensions created by this unresolved school-parent conflict are related to an unresolved community conflict based on religious identification. Several Jewish mothers who moved to Old Haven in the 1950's claim that "rigid" teachers predominated in the Old Haven elementary schools. Some of these mothers who discussed the situation with administrators were told that teaching styles reflected what "most parents in this community want." The Jewish mothers perceived this as the dominance of Catholic parents who had begun to transfer their children from parochial schools at about the same time.

The Jewish mothers were inclined to adapt a compliant attitude since they did not want to create "trouble for the schools" or within the community. Direct interaction between Jewish and Catholic mothers in school as well as extra-school affairs was minimal. Interaction has increased with the change in the school-board community relationship.

Jewish mothers who became active in school politics in the late 1950's -- through participation in the caucus to nominate board members (a non-partisan selection committee) -- report that "no one" was active at that time. Shortly after their activation there was a "take-over" by parochial school parents. The ensuing conflict was mediated by the intervention of Catholic leaders and since that time both groups appear to have been equally active in school politics, but a latent conflict persists. Whenever word "gets out" that a "group" of Catholic parents is planning to attend a school meeting, some Jewish parents circulate the rumor that the

"conservatives are getting organized to take-over the schools."

The gradual influx of Jewish residents is associated in the minds of Catholic traditionalists in Old Haven with the diffusion of modern teaching styles because of the high visibility of Jewish mothers active in school affairs and the stereotype of the "permissive" Jewish mother. Some of these traditionalists attribute the change to the perception that the Jews "control the schools." In fact, the transition is the result of changes in teaching styles and philosophy at the extra-local level and the dependence of the local school on extra-local agencies for recruits.

This misinterpretation is also related to Dr. A's and the school elite's exclusion of non-conforming traditionalists from participation which directed discussion of parent concerns into non-school communication networks.

Recent Manifestations of Parent Conflict

The increasing trend towards modernism at the elementary level has activated predominantly Catholic parents at the Old Haven school which appears to have the highest proportion of non-conforming Catholic and Jewish parents and high principal turnover.

The issue was raised publicly by the school board president at a meeting in 1971 with parents at this Old Haven school, following reports of increasing friction between vocal segments of the two factions. The board president attributed the parent conflict to a difference in "life styles" since they all shared the same goal. The conflicting expectations were revealed in the two themes which dominated the subsequent discussion: a desire for more "creativity," "options" and less "rigidity" indicated the parental adherence to modernism. A desire for an emphasis on skill development indicated parental adherence to traditionalism.

In private discussions with parents involved in this meeting, it was revealed that the modernists perceive the school as predominantly traditional, whereas the traditionalists perceive it as predominantly modern. This confusion results from the fact that the transitional character of the school has created an ambiguous reference point for the two parent factions and possibly their children. A child can find himself one year in a classroom permitting a wide range of behavior and student choice in terms of learning experiences (an elaborated student role) and the next year in a class permitting a narrow range of student behavior and teacher domination of the learning experience (restricted student role).

The school system has no mechanisms to integrate these learning experiences between grade levels and the changes in behavior expectations create tension in those cases where there is a wide difference between teacher and parent expectations. There is no evidence of the effect of this change on the child other than parent reports. Traditional parents feel that their children experience difficulty in situations where teachers are "permissive." They report that the teacher "can't control the class" and the children are not "learning as much as they should." Modern parents report that their children "withdraw" from the learning experience where teachers are too "rigid." There have been many rumors of an increase in student disruptiveness in the schools.

There are indications that these conflicting expectations arouse parent concerns in all Eastport schools but many parnets tend to adopt a compliant attitude because they believe the child should "learn to adjust to the teacher," or they don't want to "make trouble." Several parents express the view that "there's nothing the administration can do about it anyway."

There is a tendency, however, for mothers to transfer this unresolved conflict into resistance to attempts to institute further innovations. The resistance is typically expressed by traditionalists least active in formal school affairs.

Since 1970 there has been an increase in attempts to participate in school affairs by non-conforming traditionalists. This reflects the change in school board leadership and legitimation of parent involvement in educational decisions. The few non-conformists who have attempted to influence school affairs at the parent-administrative level, however, report that these efforts have been met with some form of resistance from administrators or the school elite. The resistance encountered by these new activists has increased parental awareness of the professional's domination of the parent-school relationship. A persistence in non-conformist and administrative resistance may lead to an increase in school-parent conflict or a redefinition of the parent-administration role relationship.

Summary

Innovations implemented in the Eastport schools reflect the local school's vulnerability to extra-local influences. Parent resistance to these changes are a reflection of the tendency to adhere to expectations formed through previous group identification and socialization.

This study of resistance to innovation reveals the following pattern: 1) opposition to a professional decision which directly affects the lives of children; 2) strongest opposition in factional communities with high interaction between members of the school elite and school administration and low interaction between elites and non-elites; 3) one-way communication channels between administration and non-elite parents and 4) limited

access to formal positions directly related to the decision-making center and inhibition of non-elite participation in the decision-making process.

It is suggested that maintenance of the traditional school-parent role relationship at the local school level, with professional domination of authority is inconsistent with the changes which have occurred in Eastport and the expectation of active parent participation required in the modern learning process. Parent inaction in Eastport may not be a reflection of disinterest but socialization to the prevailing norms which limit participation to supportive or conforming activities.

Tensions created by conflicting role expectations are exacerbated by the maintenance of traditional mass media communication techniques between the school and the home which tend to atomize parents. Minimal interaction and exclusion or withdrawal of non-conformists reduces parent visibility of the changes in Eastport schools. It also inhibits the development of the conditions required for the modification of norms and expectations.

The factionalism in Old Haven and low rate of interaction between parent sub-groups increases the reinforcement of misperceptions and previous attitudes and creates the potential for cleavage on any school issue.

Conclusion

Attitude change is related to the ability of the individual to become aware of the prevailing norms. The acceptance of educational innovation requires not only an increase in opportunities to perceive changing norms but an understanding of the rationale underlying the change. In a transitional school system such as

Eastport, the norms perceived by various participants are restricted by group affiliation and weak sub-group interaction.

Three factors operate in Eastport to inhibit the non-conformist's awareness of the source of change: 1) the association of change with the perceived dominance of an elite parent group, 2) minimal interaction between parents and teachers and other school representatives, 3) the attempts of the school elite to exclude non-conformists from school affairs. When confronted with an ambiguous reference point, the non-conformist is likely to experience role conflict and utilize non-school affiliated channels of communication to clarify this perception.

The emergence of the school board as a mediating agency has increased active participation at the top decision-making level and diffused opposition to budget increases. The changes in Eastport reflecting modernism activate non-conformists at the local school level which in turn generates elite efforts to mobilize conforming parents. Every innovation is inhibited or threatened by the resulting community conflict.

The findings reported here suggest that the conflict is related to the history of religious factionalism in Old Haven. Since there are no mechanisms within the community to alleviate this controversy it is likely to persist. To create a receptive climate for future educational innovations, it is suggested that such mechanisms must be instituted within the school system. Face-to-face interaction between parents and between parents and teachers should clarify expectations and possibly lead to a redefinition of the parent-school role relationship more appropriate to the requirements for active participation in the modern school.

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